

My name is Ernest Brames, and my wife and I are celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary in August. We have raised 3 wonderful children who have given us 7 wonderful grandchildren. We are also commemorating a 40 year marriage to our livestock and grain farm.

During these 40 years of farming, I have seen many different types and configurations of farm programs. The program that I consider the most successful was called the set-aside program. It was an easy program to understand and implement, and for the most part, fair to all groups. The program stayed focused on the true reason for having farm programs, **stabilization and conservation**. The programs that seem to be most **unsuccessful** have been very complex, and the true reason for a farm program was overshadowed by special interest requests and demands. In my opinion, stabilization should be considered as the most important goal of a successful farm program for today, the same as it was 50 years ago.

You may ask, stabilizing what and for what reason. The answer is stabilizing supply and price of the food supply for our nation; but also, and probably more important today than 50 years ago, is stabilizing our nation's economy by having a fair and controllable commodity export system built into the program. I feel if this export system was designed without input from special interest or emotionally driven groups, it could be very successful in creating that stabilizing part of the next program that I referred to before. Of course, I say again **Keep It Simple**.

When the current farm program was initiated, it took numerous farm meetings just to explain and try to get everyone to understand all the options. Then each farmer had to make choices on which option would be suitable for their farming operation. The Farm Service Agencies were bogged down because of the complexity of the program, and then some producers were still unsure if they had chosen the correct option. How did a program ever get written so that the highest yielding acres receive the highest payments of LDP? One would have to look at where that advice originated. This terrible inequity has cast a shadow on any worthwhile part of the present program. Another program that was very complex and was full of "loop-holes" was the PIC program which also was an inequitable program for most farmers. What I just said may seem very bold, but I don't think I was asked to testify as an individual, and then not tell the story the way I see it.

If you ask where to get the input needed to design a viable program, I will be quick to say, be skeptical of advice from farm organizations and commodity group leaders. Because of their positions, they generally have selfish interests or emotional agendas. And with either of these it is practically impossible to have an open mind.

What is taking place here today is excellent. I am so honored to be asked for my individual opinion, but I will admit I am not a detail person. There are many individual producers like myself who are better with the details that a farm program must have and would cherish the opportunity to have input into the next farm program. Agriculture related unbiased journalists and editors could be an excellent source of help, but unbiased is the key word. Agriculture colleges and their field representatives, retired and present employees of the Farm Service Agency who have administered the past and present programs would also be able to have valuable input into a workable program. I am sure this committee knows the best sources of information, but unfortunately many times the most reliable sources are the hardest to find, but as we have heard many times, “Where there is a will, there is a way.”

In writing a new farm program, remember if the program adds stability to our nation’s economy, then it will add stability to our nation’s agriculture and vice versa. That thought may put hardship on some of us near-term, but will be to everyone’s benefit in the long-term.

Beware of special interest or emotional advice. Keep a clear vision of the ultimate goal and keep it simple. With these thoughts in mind, the program cannot fail and will be a success story. Again, thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts.

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